

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 USBERLIN 1297

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, BQG, AKB, PINS
SUBJECT: BERLIN HOUSE DEBATES MOABIT PRISON BREAKOUT; DEFEATS NO-
CONFIDENCE MOTIONS

REF: (A) USBERLIN 1253, (B) USBERLIN 1232 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: THE BERLIN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES DEBATED THE
EVENTS SURROUNDING THE BREAKOUT FROM MOABIT PRISON BY TERRORIST
TILL MEYER IN A SOMEWHAT DISORDERLY FOUR-HOUR SPECIAL SESSION
JUNE 1. MOTIONS OF NO-CONFIDENCE AGAINST GOVERNING MAYOR
STOBBE AND SENATOR BAUMANN WERE DEFEATED AT SPECIAL HOUSE
SESSION JUNE 3. THE JUNE 1 DEBATE WAS SET PIECE AFFAIR WITH
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THE GOVERNING SPD/FDP PARTIES CALLING FOR PERIOD OF
SOLIDARITY AND CALM DURING WHICH BREAKOUT COULD BE
INVESTIGATED, AND OPPOSITION CDU DEMANDING IMMEDIATE
RESIGNATION OR REMOVAL OF SENATOR FOR JUSTICE BAUMANN.
THE PRIVATE ESTIMATION OF CDU AND SPD LEADERS WITH WHOM
WE HAVE SPOKEN IS THAT BAUMANN WILL SURVIVE THE IMMEDIATE
CRISIS BUT MAY BE FORCED TO LEAVE THE GOVERNMENT BY THE

END OF THIS HOUSE TERM OR OVER THE SUMMER. THE GOVERNING MAYOR CONSIDERS THIS TO HAVE BEEN THE MOST SERIOUS CRISIS HE HAD HAD TO FACE SINCE COMING TO OFFICE; HE DOES NOT CONSIDER THE CRISIS TO HAVE PASSED. IT IS ALSO HIS INTENTION TO KEEP BAUMANN INDEFINITELY. END SUMMARY.

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

1. THE SPECIAL BERLIN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES DEBATE OF THE MAY 27 BREAKOUT FROM MOABIT PRISON HELD JUNE 1 FOLLOWED PREDICTABLE LINES. THE GOVERNMENT SPD/FDP PROPOSAL TO HAVE JAILBREAK INVESTIGATED BY PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE WAS ADOPTED AND CDU OPPOSITION MOTION TO ESTABLISH INDEPENDENT COMMISSION OF EXPERTS TO PROBE JAILBREAK WAS DEFEATED, BOTH ON STRAIGHT PARTY VOTES. MOTIONS OF NO-CONFIDENCE AGAINST SENATOR FOR JUSTICE BAUMANN (FDP) AND GOVERNING MAYOR DIETRICH STOBBE FILED BY THE CDU JUNE 1 WERE DEFEATED ON STRAIGHT PARTY VOTES AT THE SPECIAL JUNE 3 SESSION OF THE HOUSE. ALL POLITICAL OBSERVERS, INCLUDING THE CDU, HAD EXPECTED THE NO-CONFIDENCE MOTIONS WOULD FAIL.

2. PRINCIPAL SPEAKERS DURING JUNE 1 DEBATE WERE THE THREE HOUSE PARTY CAUCUS LEADERS FRANZ EHRKE (SPD), HEINRICH LUMMER (CDU), AND HORST VETTER (FDP). SENATOR BAUMANN ALSO DEFENDED HIMSELF IN A LENGTHY PRESENTATION. STOBBE CONCLUDED DEBATE WITH CALL FOR UNITY IN FACE OF TERRORIST
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THREAT TO DEMOCRATIC ORDER.

3. SPEAKING FOR SPD, EHRKE DEFENDED BAUMANN, POINTING OUT THAT IN HIS TERM AS SENATOR HE HAD MADE CONSIDERABLE PROGRESS IN IMPROVING SECURITY IN BERLIN'S PRISONS. EHRKE NOTED THAT IT WAS THE SPD AND FDP WHO WERE THE FIRST TO CALL FOR AN INVESTIGATION OF THE BREAKOUT AT MOABIT PRISON BUT ADDED THAT THE GOVERNING PARTIES WOULD NOT BE STAMPEDED TO A JUDGMENT.

4. CDU SPOKESMAN HEINRICH LUMMER CHARGED THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S HANDLING OF SECURITY MEASURES AT THE PRISONS HAD BEEN SO SLIPSHOD AS TO MAKE THE GOVERNMENT VIRTUALLY GUILTY OF OFFERING ASSISTANCE (BEHILFE) TO THE TERRORISTS. NOTING THAT THE WOMEN INVOLVED IN THE MAY 27 JAILBREAK REPUTEDLY INCLUDED THREE OF THOSE WHO HAD ESCAPED FROM A BERLIN JAIL TWO YEARS AGO, LUMMER EMOTIONALLY CHARGED THAT EVERY FAILURE BY THE GOVERNMENT TO ADMINISTER SECURITY MATTERS PROPERLY HAS LED DIRECTLY TO ANOTHER CRIME. LUMMER DEMANDED TO KNOW WHY THE MANY WARNINGS THAT PRISON SECURITY WAS TOO LOOSE AND THAT POSSIBLE BREAKOUT ATTEMPT WAS IMMINENT HAD GONE UNHEEDED. EVER SINCE THE JAILBREAK

TWO YEARS AGO BY FOUR WOMEN TERRORISTS THE GOVERNMENT

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HAS KNOWN IT WAS NECESSARY TO INSTITUTE STRINGENT SECURITY
MEASURES IN BERLIN'S PRISONS. DESPITE THIS,
HOWEVER, THE VENTS OF MAY 27 PROVED THAT IT WAS "EASIER
TO CARRY WEAPONS INTO A PRISON THAN IT IS TO GET ONTO
ANY AIRPLANE ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD." THE EVENTS OF
MAY 27 HAPPENED, LUMMER CHARGED, BECAUSE OF LACK IN
ATTENTIVENESS BY PRISON AUTHORITIES, FALSE POLITICAL
THEORIES AND POOR ADMINISTRATIVE COORDINATION. LUMMER
DEMANDED BAUMANN'S RESIGNATION, BUT ADDED THAT A RESIGNA-
TION WAS REALLY NOT ENOUGH BECAUSE IT COULD NOT RESTORE
THE LOST CONFIDENCE IN THE GOVERNMENT. IF BAUMANN STAYS
IN OFFICE, LUMMER ARGUED, HE WOULD REPRESENT A "SECURITY
RISK"(SICHERHEITSRISIKO) WHICH THE CITY COULD NOT ENDURE.
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CONCLUDING, LUMMER SAID THE CDU FELT IT SHOULD BLAME ITSELF FOR NOT HAVING HOUNDED THE SPD-FDP COALITION SEVERELY ENOUGH TO FORCE IT TO ATTEND TO THE CITY'S AFFAIRS. THE CDU HAS REFRAINED FROM HEAVY CRITICISM OF THE SENAT IN RECENT MONTHS, HOWEVER, BECAUSE IT HAD BEEN CHARGED SO OFTEN THAT CDU CRITICISM HAD CONTRIBUTED SUBSTANTIALLY TO THE NEGATIVE IMAGE OF BERLIN AT HOME AND BEYOND ITS BORDERS. NOW, HOWEVER, IT WAS CLEAR THAT IT WAS THE FAILURE OF GOVERNING MAYOR STOBBE, THE SENAT AND THE COALITION PARTIES TO DEAL WITH THIS PARTICULAR CRISIS AND OTHER PRESSING MATTERS WHICH HAS DAMAGED BERLIN'S REPUTATION AND ONCE AGAIN BROUGHT SHAME TO THE CITY.

5. LUMMER'S CHARGE THAT BAUMANN HAD PROVIDED ASSISTANCE TO THE TERRORISTS THROUGH HIS ALLEGEDLY LAX ADMINISTRATION OF THE PRISON ADMINISTRATION INCENSED NUMEROUS PARLIAMENTARIANS AND SENAT OFFICIALS WHO CONSIDERED THE REMARKS TO HAVE TRANSCENDED THE LIMITS OF DECENCY. TWO SENIOR SENAT OFFICIALS TOLD MISSION OFFICER AFTERWARDS THAT THEY FELT THIS STATEMENT SHOWED LUMMER TO BE FUNDAMENTALLY IRRESPONSIBLE AND INCAPABLE OF SETTING LIMITS TO HIS OUTBURSTS. FORMER SENATOR FOR JUSTICE OXFORT STUNNED MANY OBSERVERS OF THE HOUSE DEBATE WHEN HE "SAID THE UNSAYABLE" POINTING OUT TO LUMMER, IN THE PRESENCE OF HOUSE PRESIDENT LORENZ, THAT ON THE BASIS OF LUMMER'S REMARKS THE FORMER SCHUETZ GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE ALSO HAVE TO CONSIDERED TO HAVE "GIVEN AID AND COMFORT" TO THE TERRORISTS WHEN IT YIELDED IN 1974 TO DEMANDS TO RELEASE IMPRISONED TERRORISTS IN EXCHANGE FOR THE KIDNAPPED LORENZ, AN ACTION WITH WHICH THE CDU OBVIOUSLY HAD NO QUARREL. PRO-SPD SPANDAUER VOLKSBLATT ALSO SEVERELY CRITICIZED LUMMER IN AN EDITORIAL JUNE 2, NOTING THAT HIS CHARGES THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS GUILTY

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OF HELPING SECURITY WAS A STATEMENT "UNWORTHY OF A PARLIAMENTARIAN" AND CAST DOUBTS ON LUMMER'S CREDIBILITY.

6. FOLLOWING LUMMER TO THE PODIUM, FDP HOUSE CAUCUS LEADER HORST BETTER HAD THE UNENVIABLE TASK OF DEFENDING SENATOR BAUMANN'S DECISION NOT TO RESIGN IN FACE OF THE FACT THAT FORMER SENATOR FOR JUSTICE HERMANN OXFORT (ALSO FDP) HAD FELT COMPELLED TO DO SO TWO YEARS EARLIER UNDER ANALOGOUS CIRCUMSTANCES. VETTER'S PRESENTATION WAS HARDLY CONVINCING, POORLY ORGANIZED, BADLY DELIVERED, AND REPEATEDLY INTERRUPTED BY SHOUTS FROM CDU HOUSE MEMBERS. IN SUM, VETTER MAY HAVE DONE MORE TO DAMAGE BAUMANN'S POSITION THAN ASSIST IT.

7. BAUMANN'S OWN DEFENSE OF HIS ADMINISTRATION OF THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT AND THE STEPS HE AND HIS DEPARTMENT HAD TAKEN TO INCREASE SECURITY AT MAOBIT PRISON CONSISTED OF A 45-MINUTE RECITATION CUM SCHOLARLY LECTURE ON MEASURES HE HAS PUT INTO EFFECT BY THE FACT THAT THE MOABIT PRISON HOUSES OVER 1,000 INMATES CHARGE WITH OFFENSES RANGING FROM MINOR THEFT ALL THE WAY UP TO TERRORIST ACTIVITIES. BAUMANN POINTED OUT THAT EVEN STAMMHEIM PRISON, WHICH HAD BEEN CONSTRUCTED EXCLUSIVELY TO HOUSE BAADER MEINHO TERRORISTS, HAD NOT PROVED SECURE. HE DID NOT SEE, THEREFORE, HOW ONE COULD EXPECT A GENERAL-PURPOSE PRISON, USED PRIMARILY TO DETAIN PRISONERS WHOSE CASES HAVE NOT YET BEEN RESOLVED (UNTERSUCHUNGSANSTALT), TO BE ANY MORE SECURE THAN THAT. EXCEPT FOR ONE OR TWO SHARP EXCHANGES WITH LUMMER, BAUMANN'S SPEECH AROUSED LITTLE INTEREST; INDEED, IT BARELY HELD THE ATTENTION OF HOUSE MEMBERS, MANY OF WHOM LEFT WELL BEFORE BAUMANN FINISHED SPEAKING.

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8. GOVERNING MAYOR STOBBE CONCLUDED THE DEBATE WITH A GENERAL APPEAL THAT IN AN HOUR OF CRISIS IT WAS NECESSARY TO AVOID HASTY JUDGMENTS. HE EMPHASIZED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT BE STAMPEDED BY THE ACTIONS OF TERRORISTS BENT ON DESTROYING DEMOCRATIC ORDER IN THE CITY. STOBBE ALSO SAID THAT BAUMANN HAD OFFERED HIS RESIGNATION BUT THAT HE, STOBBE, WAS NOT PREPARED TO ACCEPT IT UNTIL AND UNLESS THE PARLIAMENTARY INVESTIGATIVE COMMITTEE PRODUCED A REPORT WHICH INDICATES BAUMANN WAS AT FAULT. END UNCLASSIFIED.

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9. COMMENT: THE IMMEDIATE GOVERNMENTAL CRISIS PRECIPITATED BY THE MOABIT JAILBREAK HAS PASSED, BUT GOVERNING MAYOR STOBBE HIMSELF LOOKS UPON THE EVENTS OF THE LAST WEEK AS REPRESENTING THE MOST SERIOUS PROBLEM WITH WHICH HE HAS HAD TO DEAL TO DATE. WE HAVE ALSO BEEN TOLD BY CLOSE CONFIDANTS THAT HE DOES NOT CONSIDER THE CRISIS TO HAVE PASSED. IN STOBBE'S VIEW THE INCIDENT GOES WELL BEYOND THE PROBLEM OF THE POSSIBLE RESIGNATION OF AN ADMITTEDLY CONTROVERSIAL, EVEN DISLIKED, JUSTICE SENATOR BECAUSE ONE TERRORIST WAS FREED FROM JAIL. THE MOABIT JAILBREAK REPRESENTS THE FIRST PUBLIC SETBACK SUFFERED BY BERLIN'S IMAGE SINCE STOBBE BECAME GOVERNING MAYOR. STOBBE REALIZES THAT THE IMAGE HE HAS BEEN BUILDING FOR THE CITY (AND FOR HIMSELF) IS RATHER EPHEMERAL AND THE POSITIVE UPWARD TREND HE HAS BEEN ABLE TO CREATE THUS FAR COULD VERY EASILY BE TURNED AROUND BY THE MISHANDLING OF THE BREAKOUT AND THE POLITICAL EVENTS WHICH FOLLOWED. FOR THAT REASON STOBBE WEIGHED VERY CAREFULLY FOR FOUR DAYS FOLLOWING THE JAILBREAK WHETHER HE SHOULD JETTISON BAUMANN AND BE DONE WITH IT OR WHETHER HE WOULD "TOUGH IT OUT." WE KNOW, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT THERE WAS AT LEAST SOME SENTIMENT IN THE SPD CAUCUS AND AT ALL LEVELS OF THE PARTY TO DUMP BAUMANN, AND WE HAVE ALSO HEARD THAT MEMBERS OF BAUMANN'S OWN PARTY AND HIS JUSTICE DEPARTMENT LOOKED UPON THE SITUATION AS A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY TO REMOVE THEIR DIFFICULT COLLEAGUE FROM THE SCENE. IT WAS ONLY ON MAY 31 THAT STOBBE REACHED A FINAL DECISION (ALTHOUGH HE HAD BEEN STRONGLY LEANING IN THE DIRECTION OF KEEPING BAUMANN ALL ALONG). IN MAKING HIS DECISION TO KEEP BAUMANN, WE ARE TOLD BY SENATE CHANCELLERY INSIDERS, STOBBE HAS DECIDED TO KEEP HIS JUSTICE SENATOR PERMANENTLY. IT IS NOT STOBBE'S
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INTENTION TO WAIT UNTIL THE PRESENT FLAP DIES DOWN
AND THEN SEEK TO EASE BAUMANN OUT OF OFFICE. (STOBBE
WOULD BE PREPARED TO CHANGE HIS POSITION, HOWEVER, IF
HITHERTO UNKNOWN INFORMATION IS UNCOVERED BY THE PARLIA-
MENTARY COMMISSION, BUT STOBBE DOES NOT EXPECT ANY
SUCH FINDING TO BE MADE.) AS A RESULT OF HIS DECISION
TO KEEP BAUMANN ON, STOBBE HAS SIGNIFICANTLY STRENGTHENED
HIS POSITION VIS-A-VIS HIS OWN SENAT WHICH FEELS IT HAS
A LEADER WHO WILL NOT ABANDON IT WHEN THE GOING GETS
TOUGH, OR SACRIFICE ONE OF ITS MEMBERS TO SAVE HIS OWN
POLITICAL SKIN. END CONFIDENTIAL. DAVIS

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